



The Metropolitan Community Church

AT MOBILE

4500 BIT AND SPUR ROAD

MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

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In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

--The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.

--The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.

--Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.

They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.

--Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

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November 12, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.

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Make Up Chuck
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Janet Sherry
Rocky Don
Narrator Joe
Magenta Robert
Riff-Raff Greg
Eddie John
Dr. Scott Jimmie
Bride Liz
Groom Dale
Bridesmaids Jim
John
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Matthew
Andrew
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George Coulter, Owner

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CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and Lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

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The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order; 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

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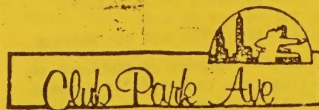
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The Metropolitan Community Church

AT MOBILE

4500 BIT AND SPUR ROAD

MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

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If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

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to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

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In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

- The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
- The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
- Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
- They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "beg ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
- Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

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November 16, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and The Esquire House.

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Director Neal
Set Design & Construction Grace
 Evelyn
 Cary

Costume Design & Execution Neal

Hair Design Robert
Make Up Gary
 Tom
 Chuck
 Al
 Mike
 Randy

Music and Lights

CAST

Frankenfurter Neal
Columbia Budgie
Brad Patrick
Janet Sherry
Rocky Don
Narrator Joe
Magenta Robert
Kiff-Raff Greg
Eddie John
Dr. Scott Jimmie
Bride Liz
Groom Dale
Bridesmaids Jim
 John
 Matthew
 Andrew
 Richard

Mother of the Bride

Idiot
You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

AZALEA CITY FLORIST

Say it with flowers, say it with ours

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George Coulter, Owner

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NEWS

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

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We met at

11:00

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COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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Make Up Chuck
Music and Lights Mike
Randy

Costume Design & Execution

Hair Design

Make Up

Music and Lights

CAST

Frankenfurter

Columbia

Brad

Janet

Rocky

Narrator

Joe

Robert

Magenta

Riff-Raff

Eddie

Dr. Scott

Bride

Liz

Groom

Bridesmaids

Jim

John

Jim

Matthew

Andrew

Richard

Idiot

Mother of the Bride

Idiot

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community events

DIGNITY NUCLEUS FORMED

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P., who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SODM-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P., who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Owls of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SODM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's convenor, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

(continued)

November

1. Rockey Horror Show
2. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
3. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
4. Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
5. Underlier-Universalists
6. Men's Lives-Men's Issues
7. Happy Birthday, Jim S
8. MCC FAV - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
9. CPA Regular Cast - Potner Sisters Alive in Paris.
10. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
11. Happy Birthday, Helen
12. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
13. Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
14. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
15. Men's Lives-Men's Issues
16. M.C. RAP - Free choice of topic
17. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
18. MCC-ESQUIRE SHAGNETTI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
19. Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
20. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
21. CPA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
22. Corral - Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
23. Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
24. Ull's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
25. MCC RAP - Free Choice of Topic
26. DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
27. \$50 per Prize, \$25 2nd for best toga costume
28. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
29. WRITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for location
30. Happy Birthday, Dee
31. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
32. CPA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
33. Corral - Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
34. Ull's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
35. MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE
36. ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY
37. CPA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
38. HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
39. Sisters of Stitches Pageant
40. HAPPY THANKSGIVING
41. David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast 5 p.m. - till
42. Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet 7:30 - till
43. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
44. 28, 29, 30 David's Special Guest - Bertha Butts
45. 30 Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m. - 12 Midnight.
46. D' BAKER
47. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
48. CPA - Name that Tune - Free Buffet
49. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
50. AIDS BENEFIT

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf.

Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



Thanksgiving

New Officers

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona	Treasurer - Tom
Clerk - Ron	Outreach Chair - John
Publications Chair - Mike	Deacon Candidate - Ken
Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat	

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Seguire! December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead," Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.



New Officers



SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

from the fellowship

more information.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- in so stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life." Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contacting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.
"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary."

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.
"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses."

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert and place into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche DuBois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragana preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

Pastor

(205) 476-9142

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YES, I want to help ICM Mexic. City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to teach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

- The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
- The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
- Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
- They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
- Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **FROM THE BOOK SHELF**

Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance: Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for Lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.

(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW-THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 12, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House. Chairman of the Production Neal Greal Director Grace Evelyn Set Design & Construction Gary Robert Costume Design & Execution Neal Greal Hair Design Tom Chuck Make Up Al Mike Music and Lights Randy

CAST Frankenfurther Neal Budgie Brad Patrick Janet Sherry Don Rocky Joe Narrator Robert Magenta Riff-Raff John Eddie Jimmie Dr. Scott Liz Bride Groom Dale Jim Bridesmaids John Jim Mother of the Bride Matthew Andrew Idiot Richard

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

AZALEA CITY FLORIST

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FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and Lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Hardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

We met at

10:00

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CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles?? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of Integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

community events

DIGNITY NUCLEUS FORMED

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Owls of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOON (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11/22

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's co-vener, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

MEXICO CITY EARTHQUAKE AFFECTS MCC

Immediately following the earthquake in Mexico City, MCC churches all over the world received a call for help from Fellowship Moderator Tony Perry. His call, "Help ICM (initials for MCC in Spanish) Mexico City." They had not asked for help, but an MCC fact-finding commission visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

Dr. Virginia Garzales, a dentist, was seriously injured when her home and office building collapsed. She was trapped in the rubble and part of her foot had to be amputated. Her companion, Magdalena Martinez, was killed in the collapse of an adjoining room. Both had applied to become medical missionaries with MCC, asking to work in one of the 3rd World countries where MCC has churches (like Nigeria). Other members homes were totally or partially destroyed, including that of a member of their Board of Directors.

A member of ICM Mexico City prayed, "Out of these ruins may a better Mexico arise." Dr. Hernandez, Director of MCC's Hispanic American District quoted Psalm 102:16-17: "When God shall build up Zion and appear in glory, God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayers."

from the fellowship

FOUNDER

November

10/27

Rocky Horror Show

2 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC

3 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

4 Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy

5. Unifarian-Universalists

Men's Lives-Men's Issues

6 Happy Birthday, Jim S

7 MCC RAY - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.

8 CPA Regular Cant - Politer Sisters

9. Alive In Paris.

10 Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

11 Happy Birthday, Helen

12 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC

13 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley

14 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

15. Men's Lives, Men's Issues

16 M.C. RAP - Free choice of topic

17 10-eters - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

18 MCC-ESQUIRE SPAGHETTI DINNER,

19 SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.

20 Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann

21 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.

22 CPA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet

23 Happy Hour Prices, No Cover

24 Happy Hour Prices, No Cover

25. Men's Lives, Men's Issues

26 MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE

27 ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY

28 HORROR SHOW - \$5.00

29 CPA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet

30. Site of St. Nicholas Regent

31. HAPPY THANKSGIVING

32. David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast

33. Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet

34. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

35. 28, 29, 30 David's Special Guest -

36. Bertha Butts

37. 30, Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m.

38. 12 Midnight.

39. 12 Midnight.

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...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf.

Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

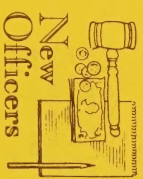
Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona
Clerk - Ron
Publications Chair - Mike
Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat

Treasurer - Tom
Outreach Chair - John
Deacon Candidate - Ken

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.



SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has arrayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary."

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses."

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche Dubois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge to Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragana preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors since 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



476-9142

Gay
Help-line

SOCIETY

MISS BETTY - OWNER
51 S. CONCEPTION ST.
433-9141

SUN. - THURS. 10 A.M. - 2 A.M.
FRI. - SAT. OPEN 24 HOURS

TROOPERS

215 Conti Street
438-9139



HOURS: 11 a.m. - 3 a.m.



Club Park Ave

JIM CRISS
General Manager

87 S. Joachim St.
Mobile, AL 36629
(205) 433-9136
(205) 433-9154

ESQUIRE
BAR & LOUNGE

- Phone 433-9175 -
Mon. - Fri. 9:30 a.m. Till
Sat. 9:30 a.m. - 2 a.m.
13 South Joachim St. Mobile, Ala.



The Metropolitan Community Church

AT MOBILE

4500 BIT AND SPUR ROAD

MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No. 3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YES, I want to help ICM Mexi. City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:
 --The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
 --The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
 --Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
 They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
 --Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Celia Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.
 Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **THE BOOK SHELF**
 Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance; Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for Lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.
 (This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW--THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 162, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.
 Chairman of the Production Greg
 Director Neal
 Set Design & Construction Grace Evelyn
 Garry
 Costume Design & Execution Neal
 Robert
 Hair Design Tom
 Make Up Chuck
 AI
 Mike
 Randy

Music and Lights
 CAST
 Frankenfurther
 Columbia
 Brad
 Janet
 Rocky
 Narrator
 Joe
 Robert
 Magenta
 Riff-Raff
 Eddie
 Dr. Scott
 Jimmie
 Liz
 Bride
 Groom
 Dæle
 Jim
 John
 Matthew
 Andrew
 Richard

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.
 WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.
 It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.
 It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

AZALEA CITY FLORIST

Say it with flowers, say it with ours
 433-3038
 George Coulter, Owner
 New customer credit always welcome

NEWS

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and Lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of Integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

We met at

OPEN DAILY NOON TO 6 A.M.

3211 Springhill Ave.
MOBILE, AL • 473-5985

54 So. Conception
 433-9258

Weekdays - Noon TILL
Weekends - 24 hours

CORRAL

FOR SALE: SCM Electric Typewriter, ribbon spool. Best offer. Evenings 8-10. 342-7891, ask for John.

PLUMBING - Indoors, reasonable rates. Expert service. Call evenings after 6, or Mondays, 476-5171, as for Harry.

CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

November

John P., who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Outlets of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

According to Shitley, the group's co-leader, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

The newly formed sketch group will start

community and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

Immediately following the earthquake in Mexico City, MCC churches all over the world received a call for help from Fellowship Moderator Tony Perry. His call, "Help ICM (initials for MCC in Spanish) Mexico City." They had not asked for help, but an MCC fact-finding commission visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

Dr. Virginia Garizualas, a dentist, was seriously injured when her home and office building collapsed. She was trapped in the rubble and part of her foot had to be amputated. Her companion, Magdalene Martinez, was killed in the collapse of an adjoining room. Both had applied to become medical missionaries with MCC, asking to work in one of the 13rd World countries where MCC has churches (like Nigeria). Other members' homes were totally or partially destroyed, including that of a member of their Board of Directors.

A member of ICM Mexico City prayed, "Ouuu of these ruins may a better Mexico arise." Dr. Hernandez, Director of MCC's Hispanic Americas District quoted Psalm 10:16-17: "When God shall build up Zion and appear in glory, God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayers."

from the fellowship

1. Rocky Horror Show
2. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
3. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
4. Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
5. Unitarian-Universalists

6 McC RAP - All you wanted to know
7 but were afraid to ask.

8 100pers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
10 Happy Birthday, Helen
SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC

11 Uu's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
12 MCCAP Free choice of tonic
13

SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann

Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
\$50 1st Prize, \$25 2nd

22	WITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for location
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Happy Hour Prices, No cover
Corral - Pool Tournament 0

ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY
HORROR SHOW - \$5.00

28 HAPPy THANKSGIVING
David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast

7:30 - till
Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

30, Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p
12 Midnight.

SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
(PA - Name That Tune - Free Buf)

original cast of the Rocky Horror

November 27th, 9 p.m. Table reserved according to donation. Donations

AIDS benefit in Mobile, please support these efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf.

Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

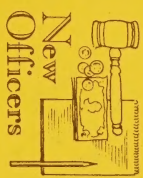
Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed

not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
From +b

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

Pastor - rev. Marge Ragona	Treasurer - Tom
Clerk - Ron	Outreach Chair - John
Publications Chair - Mike	Deacon Candidate - Ken
Student Clergy Candidates:	Vivian, Pat

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat Is Dead," Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play, and also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOEVER.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary."

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role. If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses.

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS. Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.
We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche DuBois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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The Metropolitan Community Church

AT MOBILE

4500 BIT AND SPUR ROAD

MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YFS, I want to help ICM Mexico City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR--

Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

- The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
- The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
- Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
- They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
- Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **FROM THE BOOK SHELF**

Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburgh, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance; Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.

(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW-THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 142, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Chairman of the Production | Greg |
| Director | Neal |
| Set Design & Construction | Grace Evelyn |
| Costume Design & Execution | Gary |
| | Neal |
| | Robert |
| | Gary |
| Hair Design | Tom |
| Make Up | Chuck |
| | Al |
| Musical and Lights | Mike |
| | Randy |

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| COST | Neal |
| Frankenfurter | Budgie |
| Columbia | Patrick |
| Brad | Sherry |
| Janet | Don |
| Rocky | Joe |
| Narrator | Magenta |
| | Riff-Raff |
| | Eddie |
| | John |
| | Jim |
| | Dr. Scott |
| Bride | Liz |
| Groom | Dale |
| Bridesmaids | Jim |
| | John |
| | Jim |
| | Matthew |
| | Andrew |
| | Richard |
| Mother of the Bride | |
| Idiot | |

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

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NEWS

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and Lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of Integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

We met at

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CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE - Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Oaks of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11:30

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's convenor, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

MEXICO CITY EARTHQUAKE AFFECTS MCC

Immediately following the earthquake in Mexico City, MCC churches all over the world received a call for help from Fellowship Moderator Troy Perry. His call, "help ICM (initials for MCC in Spanish) Mexico City." They had not asked for help, but an MCC fact-finding commission visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

Dr. Virginia Carrizales, a dentist, was seriously injured when her home and office building collapsed. She was trapped in the rubble and part of her foot had to be amputated. Her companion, Magdalena Martinez, was killed in the collapse of an adjoining room. Both had applied to become medical missionaries with MCC, asking to work in one of the 3rd world countries where MCC has churches (like Nigeria). Other members homes were totally or partially destroyed, including that of a member of their Board of Directors.

A member of ICM Mexico City prayed, "Out of these ruins may a better Mexico arise." Dr. Hernandez, Director of MCC's Hispanic Americas District quoted Psalm 102:16-17: "When God shall build up Zion and appear in glory, God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayers."

from the fellowship

FROM THE PASTOR

November

1. Rocky Horror Show
2. Sunday Worship MCC
3. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
4. Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
5. Under-the-Universalists

Men's Lives-Men's Issues
Happy Birthday, Jim S
MCC RAP - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.

CFA Regular Coat-Polisher Sisters
Allive in Paris.
Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

Happy Birthday, Helen
Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC

Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
11. UU's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
12. MCC RAP - Free choice of topic
13. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
14. MCC-ESQUIRE SPAGHETTI DINNER.

SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.

CFA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
18. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
19. UU's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
20. MCC RAP - Free Choice of Topic

DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
\$50 1st Prize, \$25 2nd
for best toga costume
21. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
22. WRITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for location

Happy Birthday, Dee
SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
CFA - Name That Tune, Free Buffet

Happy Hour Prices, No cover
25. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
26. UU's - Men's Lives, Men's Issues
27. MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE

ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY
HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
28. CFA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
Sisters of Stitches Pageant

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast
3 p.m. - fill
Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet

7:30 - fill
Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
28, 29, 30 David's Special Guest -

Bertha Butts
30, Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m.
12 Midnight.

PA - Name That Tune - Free Buffet
Happy Hour Prices, No cover

Happy Hour Prices, No cover

Happy Hour Prices, No cover

Happy Hour Prices, No cover

Happy Hour Prices, No cover

Happy Hour Prices, No cover

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf. Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



Community Affairs

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona | Treasurer - Tom |
| Clerk - Ron | Outreach Chair - John |
| Publications Chair - Mike | Deacon Candidate - Ken |
| Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat | |

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.



Thanksgiving

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary.

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses.

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes gay people, lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- it is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces

Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,

I have it in me so much nearer home

To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life." Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche Dubois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragone preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown," Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



476-9142

Gay
Help-line

SOCIETY

MES BETTY - OWNER
51 S. CONCEPTION ST.
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FRI. - SAT. OPEN 24 HOURS

TROOPERS

215 Conti Street
438-9139



HOURS: 11 a.m. - 3 a.m.



JIM CRISS
General Manager

87 S. Joachim St.
Mobile, AL 36622
(205) 433-1336
(205) 433-9151

ESQUIRE
BAR & LOUNGE

- Phone 433-9175 -
Mon. - Fri. 9:30 a.m. Till
Sat. 9:30 a.m. - 2a.m.
13 South Joachim St. Mobile, Ala.



The Metropolitan Community Church

AT MOBILE

4500 BIT AND SPUR ROAD

MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

Volume 1, No. 2

October 1985

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART...

The veil of distaste and misconceptions surrounding the gay segment of the population is nowhere better illustrated than in the film, "God, Gays and the Gospel," a no-nonsense look at the rapid rise of the Metropolitan Community Church.

One of the most poignant plights of gay people in today's world is the denial of their right to worship by most of the traditional organized religions. Almost without exception the Christian faith has taken upon itself the right to refuse gays a part in the Family of God.

The long struggle by MCC founder Rev. Troy Perry to establish a faith, not just for gays but for anyone, is the focus of the film. In concise, to the point terms, the production addresses the sheer magnitude of the work being done and the forward strides being made by Perry and his legion of pastors and congregations.

Since its founding in 1969, MCC has endured everything from ridicule to bombings to burned-out church sanctuaries. More than 17 years later, Perry and his followers have forged a recognized, respected faith wherein all are welcomed. It is a tribute to the ecumenical and accepting nature of this church that 20 per cent of its members are non-gay. It is a true illustration of the overused, misused term, "real Christian people."

Perry, a transplanted Floridian, excluded from the church of his childhood, spent years berating himself as "unacceptable." In the end, he determined that there is no reason -- save for human bigotry and Biblical misinterpretation -- for gays to be denied a right to their faith. Nowhere in the Bible, he points out, is there condemnation of homosexuality as it is understood today. In one of his most moving sermons, he presents a stunning point: "If AIDS is God's 'gift' to the homosexual, then is toxic shock syndrome God's 'gift' to women for being female? ...or is Legionnaires' Disease God's 'gift' to the American Legion for being too patriotic?

From the perspective of a "straight," the message of "God, Gays, and the Gospel" is very much to the point: No human deserves the right to tell another he or she will never be acceptable in the eyes of God. Moreover, it should be remembered that Perry et al are not working for immediate and total social acceptance, but for establishment of a climate of cooperation and understanding.

No "straight" who professes a concern for human rights should let gays bear this struggle alone.

(Note: N.J.Green is MCC at Mobile's "token straight," our assistant organist. Thank God for our "straight" friends.)

MCC MEMBERS-ATTENTION!

Congregational Meeting, October 27, following worship service. Election of officers, other important business, including coming into agreement with GSS changes.

REMINDER

FROM THE EDITOR--

Our first issue was a roaring success, so the community tells us. We personally wish to thank the bar owners and managers for making the newsletter a reality, rather than the "dream" so many of us have talked about for the last couple of years. At last we have a way to communicate ideas among gays in Mobile. We also want to apologize to Chuck at Troopers for omitting a news item last month. Thanks for bearing with us and our mistakes -- we'll get it right with practice. A word of thanks to all of you and our readers from the small group at MCC. Because of you the newsletter will continue to grow, to increase our awareness and to solidify the community.

To date we have received the names "Revelations," "Mobile Pride News," and "Genesis." Don't be bashful. Send or call in your suggestion.

We stated our purpose last month, "to offer a news source for the entire community." We are happy to report that this issue, our second, has accomplished that goal. Sincere applause to each organization and business for your participation. We are open to your suggestions and your criticism. Our new feature, "Community Profile" has already been designated for the November issue. Send in the name of someone you wish to acknowledge in a future issue.

Our editorial policy requires that a name and address be submitted along with news copy. Your name and address will not be printed without your written consent, but we must have this information to protect the legal position of the church. Please drop editorial copy or editorial replies at the church or mail them to: MCC Newsletter, P.O. Box 8524, Mobile, Ala. 36608. The deadline for all copy is the Third Monday of the Month.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN

NEWS FROM THE LESBIAN TASK FORCE OF NOW

Two important pieces of legislation are going to be brought to Congress in this year, NOW has informed us. One, is H.R. 230, the Federal Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights legislation which is spearheaded by Representative Ted Weiss of Brooklyn, N.Y. and carries the endorsement of 44 other representatives, including Rep. Gerry Studds of Massachusetts, an openly gay legislator. The bill primarily calls for the insertion of the words, "affectional or sexual orientation," throughout the Civil Rights Act of 1964, following the word "color," and in other legislation, like the Equal Opportunity Act, where it is inserted after "sex," thus identifying gay and lesbian discrimination as equal to that against people of color and as pervasive as sexism. Interestingly, the same act speaks against acts of intimidation or violence against gays and lesbians in the same passage that it speaks about violence against religious groups.

The other piece of legislation is the now infamous McCarran-Walter act, which prohibits certain people from entering the United States because of political or sexual orientation. Farley Mowat, the Canadian author of such dangerous books as the environmental study, "Never Cry Wolf," and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Colombia's Nobel Prize winning novelist, were both excluded -- and refused to be singled out as special cases -- under this Act. Gay men and women can be refused entry into the U.S. -- and have been -- by the terms of the McCarran Act. It is important for the McCarran Act to not include gays and lesbians under the heading of those accused of "moral turpitude."

The legislation above is entitled Immigration Exclusion and Deportation Amendments of 1985. The first is HR 230. Your congressional representative will vote on both of these. Make your wishes known. One letter -- one letter -- can make the difference, because very few letters on any subject are received from constituents, and as many as five or six letters can seem like an avalanche. If you are interested in how to write to Congress, call the HELPLINE for a copy of MCC's booklet, Writing to Congress, from MCC's Department of Christian Social Action.

Bulletin Board

ORDER OF OSIRIS -- "The Rocky Horror Show" Friday and Saturday, November 1 and 2, Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House -- at the Esquire House. \$5.00 admission. See an Osiris member or your bartender for tickets.

Less than 140 days to Osiris' 5th Anniversary Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALISTS -- Study series for 4 weeks on Men's Life and Men's Issues. Call the UU's at 342-6834 for information and starting date (near the end of the month.)

2-day Workshop -- The Haunting Church October 18 and 19 at the UU Fellowship 6345 Old Shell Road.

Volleyball -- every 2nd and 4th Sunday, at 2 P.M. at the UU's, weather permitting.

*better
gay than
grumpy*



TROOPERS -- Shuffleboard tournaments every Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. Pool tournaments every Thursday at 8:30. Some of the best popcorn in Mobile.

CORRAL -- Pool tournament every Monday at 9:00 p.m. Please watch for announcements of upcoming Halloween events.

CPA -- Costume contest at midnight in conjunction with Hooker's Ball.

Free buffet every Sunday at 9:30 p.m. Watch for "Name that Tune" to begin early November on Sunday evenings.

DAVID'S II -- Special Guest, Halloween Eve through Saturday, Carmen Del Rio.

First Sunday of October begins David's free buffet from 3-9 p.m., and the Tea Dance.

Shrimp boil, Sunday October 13th, from 3 till? To help raise funds for MCC's HELPLINE and newsletter. \$3.00 cover, includes all the boiled shrimp you can eat, along with other goodies.

ESQUIRE -- Rocky Horror Show November 1 and 2 at 9:30 p.m. Get your tickets from Esquire or any Osiris member. \$5.00 per ticket.

PROFILE

Did you enjoy Mobile's Gay Pride 85? Our first profile is, Harry, organizer and leader of Pride 85. Harry was the catalyst that brought together the various elements of the community. It wasn't his first time out, certainly not his first effort for our benefit. Fifteen years in the Mobile area has seen Harry speaking at the University of South Alabama and Springhill College on gay/lesbian issues. He was one of the strong leaders of the old Gulf Alliance for Equality as well.

When Harry isn't working on our behalf, he enjoys meeting the public in his retail profession. While there's still daylight after a hard day at work, you might see him out bicycling or running, or on Sundays offering his talents at the Unitarian-Universalists' worship and fellowship. "My religion," Harry said, has given me a lot more direction in my life, and a greater sense of freedom to allow my own beliefs to evolve."

Harry offered the following thoughts about and reflections on Gay Pride '85: '85 was very successful considering the late starting date for planning. '84, our first Gay Pride Activity, made '85 much easier to put together. Adding more organizations -- the UU's and MCC -- added much to '85's success. Without Damn B, '85 would not have come together. A SPECIAL THANKS TO HER.

For 1986 Gay Pride, Harry foresees greatness. "For once, we are starting off with some money, \$186.00, thanks to the bars. We will begin planning at a much earlier date, offering the same type of activities, with more variety, however. We will certainly push for more publicity and participation from all the organizations. We want Gay Pride to be financially self-supporting, and there's no reason it shouldn't be if we all work at it."

When asked what he would change if given the right opportunity, Harry offered the following: "I'd like to see more open gay/lesbian businesses, organizations, and individuals come out, and a greater media presence for the community. However, the fear of coming out is still our greatest obstacle. Most of us, including me, still face job discrimination, neighborhood harassment, and the possible loss of our families or their strong disapproval."

In a larger context, Harry went on, "Much of our recent publicity has been derogatory. I feel that the Moral Majority uses us as their biggest fundraiser, particularly now that AIDS has come to the forefront of the news media."

Harry is one of the strongest and most open figures in our Mobile Gay Community, and with his support and leadership, gay Mobile should reach the goals which he is helping us set.

SOCIETY LOUNGE -- Beginning in October, the first weekend each month, Miss Betty will be presenting weekend shows at 10 and 12 midnight. No cover.

TROOPERS

215 Conti Street

438-9139



54 So. Conception
433-9258

Weekdays - Noon Till
Weekends - 24 hours

CORRAL

THERE IS NO LONGER AN EXCUSE FOR SPREADING AIDS

Right now in the gay community, we're faced with some extremely difficult decisions because of AIDS -- sexual decisions affecting our lives and lifestyles. We Gaymen have come up with a lot of excuses for avoiding the issue.

We all know that safer sex can reduce the risk of contracting and spreading AIDS. Some practices are more effective than others; some we have questions about.

We all need to make informed decisions, not excuses. You'll probably agree that none of the following excuses justify the spread of AIDS in our community:

"WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?"

It's yours. Your partner's. And it's the community's. Everyone must take a concerned and active role if we're going to stop the spread of this disease.

Here's another common excuse: "If someone doesn't ask me to practice safer sex, I figure that's his decision and I respect it."

Why? Aren't you concerned? Perhaps your partner is just as uncomfortable in raising the issue as you are.

"WHOSE LIFE IS IT, ANYWAY?"

It's yours. Your partner's. And the community's. The excuse, "It's my life," is only partly true. The life of your partner and the well-being of the community are also at stake.

AIDS is not just a physical problem. There are political, social, and economic effects as well. There is already evidence that social freedoms may be restricted because of AIDS. AIDS can be used as an excuse for anti-gay action and legislation.

Making decisions about sexual practices is difficult. Sticking to those decisions is even more difficult. But this isn't a moral issue; it's a matter of life and death.

"CHANGING MY SEX LIFE ISN'T A CURE FOR AIDS."

That's true. There is no cure or vaccine. And researchers think they are years away from developing one. Safer sexual practices are our best means right now of reducing our risk and stopping the spread of AIDS.

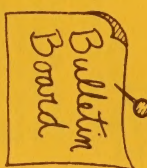
"CHANGING NOBODY ELSE IS DOING IT!"

The fact is that a major research project conducted by the AIDS Foundation among San Francisco Gaymen revealed that two-thirds of the gay community is making a serious effort to reduce their risk by practicing safer sex. Two-thirds!

Talk about it. Even though it's a difficult subject for everyone, chances are your partner is just as concerned as you are and would probably welcome a chance to discuss it.

Let's stop making excuses. Let's stop the spread of AIDS.

Reprinted from ACTS 29, Newsletter of the ACTS 29, a community of people who are aware of risks and are changing their sexual habits. Safe sex works.



HOOKER'S BALL - HALLOWEEN NIGHT -- Presented by all your favorite bars and the Order of Ostris. Prizes for costumes, all bars are involved, begins 7:00 p.m. Halloween night, costumes are invited, and you are especially requested to attend this celebration of what is turning into the second most exciting activity of the year.

Happy Birthday - Queen Richard, Oct. 9, from all the folks at Equine House.

Happy Anniversary - Oct. 5 to Chuck and Troopers on their 2nd Year of Fun and Support of the community.

Happy Belated Anniversary to CPA - We were not notified in time for publication last month, but CPA celebrated their 2nd anniversary on Sept. 27th. Great going, guys!



from the fellowship

12TH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF MCC

"FREE TO BE"

Sacramento, California. The conference got off to an exciting start. Rev. Elders Freda Smith and Nancy Wilson both preached Monday. I especially enjoyed hearing them. The film, "God, Gays, and the Gospel" was also shown for the first time on Monday.

The film, a documentary telling about MCC and what it means, cost about \$100,000 to make. Many unique aspects of MCC were brought out. The fact that MCC has members from every religious background and the highest proportion of women ministers were particularly interesting.

In the business meetings, a great deal was accomplished in the first few days. The Government Structures and Systems proposal was accepted with some minor amendments. Two changes will have the most immediate impact. One is the adoption of the General Council as the governing body of MCC. The General Council will be composed of the Board of Directors and the District Coordinators, thus giving total regional representation at the highest MCC level. The other change is that there will be only commissioned and chartered churches (instead of the three tier system as previously: Study group, mission, chartered church). At the conference I was an official observer, with a voice, but without vote. In the future, all delegates will have a vote. Each delegate will represent one hundred members or a portion of 100 if the church is smaller. This means that even the smallest church will have a voting delegate.

All of the elders standing for re-election were elected.

I had an opportunity to sing in the Conference Choir, and attended several workshops, including the Sexuality and Spirituality and Spiritual Gifts workshop.

R.P., Delegate

Check it Out

MCC is the largest Gay/lesbian organization in the world.

NOW (Nat'l Organization for Women) offers insurance for "significant others" (not just physicians, but alternative medicine as well).

Jerry Falwell and his "Moral Majority" are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars across the country to stop Gay/lesbian rights.

A local printer refused to print our first newsletter because of its content.

A local bank refused to open a joint bank account for a well-known Gay couple.

The Unitarian-Universalist Association openly supports Gay/lesbian rights.

Mobile Mental Health has actively trained and offers continued support for the Gay Helpline volunteers.

The Gay Helpline is in operation every night from 6 p.m. to midnight for anyone needing someone to talk to -- check it out.

The local bar owners and managers -- Chuck, Miss Betty, Jim, John, Grace and David -- make the printing and mailing of this newsletter possible.

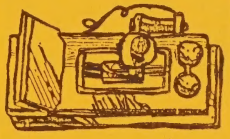
The bar owners and managers donated money and supplies for the kick-off party to celebrate the opening of the Helpline, and that we will be raising funds for the Helpline from time to time, due to their generosity.

We met at

Gay

476-9142

Help-line



12th St

OPEN DAILY NOON TO 6 A.M.

3211 Springhill Ave.

Mobile, AL • 473-5985

...from the pastor

SAUL AND ANOMIE

In the late 1800's, the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, coined the word **ANOMIE** (without a name) to explain the psychological state of strangers, people at the edge of social movements with enormous change, and people who belonged to subcultures where they were unsure of what the social expectations were within a dominant group. They felt, as James Baldwin must have, like "nobody knows my name." As a matter of fact, in a true state of anomie, it's more like "I don't even know my own name." Durkheim postulated that when a society is experiencing great anomie, the suicide rate goes up. When I read of Saul, the first king of Israel in the Bible, I realized that even in Biblical times, people knew the concept of anomie, even though they didn't know the word.

Saul lived in an anomic time. He was a soldier who had been trained in the old skills of warfare before iron was invented. Suddenly, there was iron. And iron was so strong that all the weapons he had been taught to use were nearly useless. So he learned to use iron, but he was never comfortable with it. Then the people of his area learned about a new God, and all the things he was used to in the old gods were outdated. To add to his problems, Jahweh decided Saul should be king of Israel. Saul wasn't from a royal family (there weren't any royal families in Israel -- he was the first) and he didn't know how a king behaved, he'd never even had a king. But Jahweh had selected him to be king. And still worse, his son gets friendly with this David fellow -- and he knows there's something strange there -- but can that fellow play the harp! He wasn't even permitted to ask the seer what was going to happen, and feel secure, he had to trust this Jahweh God. Saul learned to adapt -- but he was never happy with the new ways, and when things really got tough, he looked to his old gods and went over to see the Witch of Endor to find out what the enemy had in store. That was where he and Jahweh God parted. Poor Saul. He was caught in a world he hardly understood! Everything was changing, nothing seemed to have a center. How he wished for the good old days, when the gods were secure, the military knew what they were doing, the country had the right kind of folk leading it, and people knew how to behave-- knew the rules. Saul was so confused, he hardly knew his own name any more. He was a real case of anomie. And eventually, he did what Durkheim postulated -- he committed suicide.

Can you see some parallels? Many people today feel that sense of anomie. The world has changed so rapidly that people are frightened. They want some sense of the past to hold on to. God, they pray, make it safe again, let me know what to expect! Many Christians are at that point. The world has changed so greatly that they are frightened. Nuclear energy, great social upheaval -- especially within the time of the baby boomers; new forms of government--like Communism and socialism -- scare them. The questioning of old beliefs and the arising of new ideas --all of these together are frightening for people who remember how simple it was when everybody knew what to expect. When the milk train stopped and the old time religion had meaning for everyone -- when everyone was American and your son or daughter hadn't picked up some new religion like the Moonies. When sexuality and sex roles were simple -- men were men and women were girls, and nobody they knew was gay. People out there are scared. And they want the old time religion that had meaning and they want to go back to the time when everybody knew the rules. Well, it's that kind of time, and Jerry Falwell plays upon the fears of those people, and promises them "The Old Time Gospel Hour" and tells them who the enemy is (us), and they follow him, and he profits, and profits, and profits.

But maybe there's more to it than that. Durkheim was also talking about anomie being a condition for strangers and sojourners and for people in subcultures. Maybe there's something there for us, as well. Gay liberation has called us to come out -- it has asked us to change our ways and to trust God to help us find a way to be a new kind of gay people-- strong, and open, and fearless. And



WELCOME

SOOM AND DIGNITY TO BEGIN IN MOBILE

Efforts are being made to organize two new organizations for gay and Lesbian people in Mobile. According to John P., who is spearheading the drive, the Silver Owls of Mobile (SOOM) and a Dignity chapter are looking for persons interested in these groups.

SOOM is a social group for older people, usually over the age of 40, and for younger people who like to be with older gays and Lesbians.

Dignity is an organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The chapter will be part of the national organization that consists of over 117 chapters across the nation.

"Too often gay and Lesbian Catholics feel alienated from their church. Dignity has been successful in being a bridge for these people to rebuild a religious life. Also, Dignity has been effective in creating a dialogue with the church's hierarchy," said John P.

He noted that the SOOM organization is simply an attempt to bring people together in a social context. "Many older gays and Lesbians simply have no social place to go except the bars, where they are usually ignored by younger people. SOOM will be an attempt to provide a congenial group for dinner parties, theater and other outings.

Anyone interested in SOOM or Dignity is asked to contact John at 342-7891, or the HELPLINE at 476-9142.

FIRST NIGHTS

People interested in going to theater: Involves joining Joe Jefferson Players (\$25.00 for 6 plays/musicals) plus other theater presentations. Call HELPLINE for further information - 476-9142.



JIM CRISS
General Manager

#7 S. Joachim St.
Mobile, AL 36602
(205) 433-1236
(205) 743-9765

...from the pastor

maybe we, too, are like the Falwell followers. It was so secure in my closet. I was so comfortable hiding. I really don't need these new, frightening ideas of openness and liberation, do I? Oh, yes, you do. You need them for your mental health, you need them for your ability to be a whole person, you need them in a world of change, so that you can change with the world and not be stuck, as Saul was, in fear. Saul clung to the old gods, and could not trust Jahweh God -- and he lost. Most of us try the same thing. We stick to our old gods, our closetedness and our lies. God sees through us -- God knows who we are, and God loves us enough to invite us to be KING. Be all you can be, be the royal person God invites you to be. The alternative for far too many of us has been Saul's solution, suicide; the death of who we really are or can be. The gay community is growing up, and learning that in taking risks there is strength and growth. Don't be a Saul -- be a David. Take the risks -- and grow!



COMING OUT

I've often heard Rev. Marge quote her friend from Providence, Ray LaRiviere, who coined a phrase about gay attitudes, "As long as I can boogie, I'm free." A lot of us started out the same way. If it hadn't been for Gay/Lesbian bars, we would have had nothing. Work, a relationship, maybe -- and then party time at the bars. But heavens, don't ask me to meet your there before the sun went down.

We remain in our closets, doing nothing, hoping and sometimes even praying that no one ever discovers who we "really are." From birth, almost, we are conditioned that to be Gay/Lesbian is a fate worse than death. So we hide and we die a thousand deaths each day. And then one day something wakes us up and we come face to face with years of playing "straight" games. The roles we adopted are unbelievable and staggering, not to mention the toll oppression has taken on our lives.

Same or insane? The medical world finally realized our sexual preferences had nothing to do with our sanity. Yet, many of our people have difficulty making it through life. Many suffer dependency problems -- sexual, drug, alcohol -- many are emotionally crippled by "oppression sickness." They really don't remain sane in world that tries to crush them.

To many of you out there, "coming out" would be insane. For many it would be. The greatest day of my life, however, was when I became insane. Oh, I'd already come out to some very selected "straight" friends, having carefully tested the waters before ever diving. Heck, they already knew who I was anyway.

Things started changing the day I walked into the new MCC. Sweat poured down my back, fear gripped every part of my body. I made myself sit in the second pew from the front, another bold move for me. I looked behind me, and came face to face with an older "straight couple." I muttered some weird excuse to whom I still don't know) and got up to leave. But I didn't.

I made it through the daylight. I made it through the service in God's house. I was introduced to the older couple and lived. Last week at Bruno's I happened to notice my attire and chuckled to myself. My MCC teshirt looked quite nice! A couple of people gave me knowing smiles, but most of the shoppers paid no attention to me. Most of them, if they knew what an MCC was wouldn't have cared anyway. Most of your professional associates, your families, your straight friends probably know you are right now. Some may not want the confrontation of being told, but many would welcome your openness and applaud your courage and honesty.

For years, a small minority ran my life. Now I'm in charge. IT FEELS GOOD!!!!

October

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
00 WORSHIP 10:30 AM ev. every Sunday	MOVIE NIGHT 123 ROCKY HORROR SHOW AT ESQUIRE WITH OSIRIS	1	2 RAP: W's on Top-- Power in Rela- tionships.	3		4 PAPER'S ANNIVERSARY
6 MCC WORSHIP 7:00 PM 5:30 New Memb.	7	8	9 RAP: Peer Pressure - Handling your friends.	10	11	12
13 MCC WORSHIP-7pm 3:00 Shrimp Bowl at DAVID'S III VOLLEYBALL	14 COLUMBUS DAY OBSERVED	15	16 RAP Cross-Genera- tional Rela- tionships	17	18 UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS 2-DAY WORKSHOP "The Haunting Church"	19
20 MCC WORSHIP-7pm 5:30 New Memb	21	22	23 RAP HOLDING HANDS Making a politi- cal state- ment.	24	25	26
27 MCC WORSHIP-7pm UU VOLLEYBALL 5:30 New Memb MOTHER-IN-LAW DAY	28	29	30 RAP HOMOPHOBIA -- THEIRS AND OURS	31 HOOKER'S BALL ALL THE BARS HALLOWEEN		

CLASSIFIED ADS

Weekend Sketch Group -- interested? Call the HELPLINE for information.

WRITERS GROUP -- Meet once a month for social contact and constructive criticism of members' work. Bring a piece of writing for criticism, and keep a log of the number of hours spent writing. Contact Shirley L. at the HELPLINE.

BIKERS (no, silly, not that kind!) are being sought for a bike riding group. Ride, bring lunch and picnic-- weather will be perfect soon.



Halloween

FOR SALE: SCM Electric Typewriter, ribbon spool. Best offer. Evenings 8-10. 342-7891, ask for John.

PLUMBING - Indoors, reasonable rates. Expert service. Call evenings after 6, or Mondays, 476-5171, as for Harry.

CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles?? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

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The Metropolitan Community Church

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MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YFS, I want to help ICM Maxia City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR--

Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

- The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
- The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
- Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
- They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
- Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Ball Faxon, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **THE BOOK SHELF**

Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance; Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.

(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.78B.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

NEWS

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and Lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

WELL DONE OSTRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

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ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

We met at

11:00 AM

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CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Gals of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11/22

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's co-venter, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

MEXICO CITY EARTHQUAKE AFFECTS MCC

Immediately following the earthquake in Mexico City, MCC churches all over the world received a call for help from Fellowship Moderator Troy Perry. His call, "Help ICM (initials for MCC in Spanish) Mexico City." They had not asked for help, but an MCC fact-finding commission visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

Dr. Virginia Carrizales, a dentist, was seriously injured when her home and office building collapsed. She was trapped in the rubble and part of her foot had to be amputated. Her companion, Magdalena Martinez, was killed in the collapse of an adjoining room. Both had applied to become medical missionaries with MCC, asking to work in one of the 3rd World countries where MCC has churches (like Nigeria). Other members homes were totally or partially destroyed, including that of a member of their Board of Directors.

A member of ICM Mexico City prayed, "Out of these ruins may a better Mexico arise." Dr. Hernandez, Director of MCC's Hispanic Americas District quoted Psalm 102:16-17: "When God shall build up Zion and appear in glory, God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayers."

from the fellowship

FROM THE FELLOWSHIP

November

1. Lady Horror Show
2. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
3. Corral Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
4. Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
5. Unlabeled-unlabeled

Men's Lives-Men's Issues

6. Happy Birthday, Jim S
7. MCC RAP - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
8. CFA Regular Gals-Polmer Sisters
9. Alive in Paris.
10. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
11. Happy Birthday, Helen
12. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
13. Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
14. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
15. 12th Men's Lives, Men's Issues
16. MCC RAP - Free choice of topic
17. M.C. RAP - Free choice of topic
18. MCC-ESQUIRE SPAGHETTI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
19. Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
20. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
21. CFA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
22. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
23. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
24. 12th Men's Lives, Men's Issues
25. MCC RAP - Free Choice of Topic
26. DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
27. \$50 1st Prize, \$25 2nd
28. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
29. Writers Group-Call 476-9142 for location
30. Happy Birthday, Dee
31. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
32. CFA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
33. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
34. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
35. 12th Men's Lives, Men's Issues
36. MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE
37. ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
38. CFA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
39. Sisters of St. Nicholas Pageant
40. HAPPY THANKSGIVING
41. David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast
42. 3 p.m. - till
43. Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
44. 7:30 - till
45. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
46. 26-29, 30 David's Special Guest - Bertha Butts
47. 30-Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m. 12 Midnight.
48. DINNER
49. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
50. CFA - Name that Tune - Free Buffet
51. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
52. AIDS BENEFIT

ADDS BENEFIT

Original cast of the Rocky Horror Show and the Esquire will be donating their time to raise money for AIDS research. November 27th, 9 p.m. Tables reserved according to donation. Donations at the door will go to a minimum of \$5.00. All donations received will go to AIDS Research. This is the first AIDS benefit in Mobile, please support these efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf. Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic — socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short — thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona | Treasurer - Tom |
| Clerk - Ron | Outreach Chair - John |
| Publications Chair - Mike | Deacon Candidate - Ken |
| Student Clergy Candidates: Wylan, Pat | |

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned.

Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE



Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary.

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses.

"Continued unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

**We have to stop making excuses.
We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.**

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche Dubois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

Pastor

(205) 476-9142

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YES, I want to help ICM Mexi. City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

--The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.

--The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.

--Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people. They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.

--Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **THE BOOK SHELF**
FROM
Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance: Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue: Gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents: a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.
(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW--THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 16, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.

Chairman of the Production Greg
Director Neal
Set Design & Construction Evelyn
Costume Design & Execution Gary
Hair Design Robert
Make Up Tom
Music and Lights Chuck
Mike
Randy

CAST
Frankenfurter Neal
Columbia Patrick
Brad Sherry
Janet Don
Rocky Joe
Narrator Robert
Magenta Greg
Riff-Raff John
Eddie Jimmie
Dr. Scott Liz
Bride Dale
Groom Jim
Bridesmaids John
Mother of the Bride Jim
Idiot Andrew
Richard

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

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FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of Integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

We met at

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BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

community events

DIGNITY NUCLEUS FORMED

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elected by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Gals of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's convenor, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills.

People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

MEXICO CITY EARTHQUAKE AFFECTS MCC

Immediately following the earthquake in Mexico City, MCC churches all over the world received a call for help from Fellowship Moderator Troy Perry. His call, "Help ICM (initials for MCC in Spanish) Mexico City." They had not asked for help, but an MCC fact-finding commission visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

Dr. Virginia Carrizales, a dentist, was seriously injured when her home and office building collapsed. She was trapped in the rubble and part of her foot had to be amputated. Her companion, Magdalena Martinez, was killed in the collapse of an adjoining room. Both had applied to become medical missionaries with MCC, asking to work in one of the 3rd World countries where MCC has churches (like Nigeria). Other members homes were totally or partially destroyed, including that of a member of their Board of Directors.

A member of ICM Mexico City prayed, "Out of these ruins may a better Mexico arise." Dr. Hernandez, Director of MCC's Hispanic Americas District quoted Psalm 102:16-17: "When God shall build up Zion and appear in glory, God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayers."

from the fellowship

November

- 1. Rocky Horror Show
- 2. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 3. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 4. Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
- 5. Unilateral-Universalists
- 6. Happy Birthday, Jim S
- 7. MCC RAV - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
- 8. CTA Regular Cast - Pointer Sisters Alive in Paris.
- 9. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 10. Happy Birthday, Helen
- 11. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 12. Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 13. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 14. UV's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 15. M.C. RAV - Free choice of topic
- 16. M.C. ESCURE SPAGHETTI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
- 17. Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
- 18. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 19. CTA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
- 20. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 21. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 22. UV's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 23. M.C. RAV - Free Choice of Topic
- 24. DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
- 25. \$50 Lat Fitze, \$25 2nd for beat toga costume
- 26. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 27. WRITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for location
- 28. Happy Birthday, Dee
- 29. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 30. CTA - Name That Tune, Free Buffet
- 31. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 32. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 33. UV's - Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 34. M.C. THANKSGIVING SERVICE
- 35. ESCURE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
- 36. CTA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
- 37. Sisters of St. Thomas Pageant
- 38. HAPPY THANKSGIVING
- 39. David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast 3 p.m. - till
- 40. Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet 7:30 - till
- 41. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 42. 28, 29, 30 David's Special Guest - Bethia Butts
- 43. 30 Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m. - 12 Midnight.
- 44. D' REBER
- 45. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 46. CTA - Name that Tune - Free Buffet
- 47. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 48. AIDS BENEFIT

Official cast of the Rocky Horror Show and the Equire will be donating their time to raise money for AIDS research. November 27th, 9 p.m. Tables reserved according to donation. Donations at the door begin at a minimum of \$5.00. All donations received will go to AIDS Research. This is the first AIDS benefit in Mobile, please support these efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and grovel when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf. Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona	Treasurer - Tom
Clerk - Ron	Outreach Chair - John
Publications Chair - Mike	Deacon Candidate - Ken
Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat	

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes gay people, lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, a committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

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"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary."

"By continuing unsafe sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses."

"Continued unsafe sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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The Metropolitan Community Church

AT MOBILE

4500 BIT AND SPUR ROAD

MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YFS, I want to help ICM Mexic City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:
--The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
--The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
--Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
--Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **FROM THE BOOK SHELF**
Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance; Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.

(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries: children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW--THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 12, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.

Chairman of the Production Neal
Director Greg
Set Design & Construction Grace
Costume Design & Execution Evelyn
Hair Design Gary
Make Up Robert
Music and Lights Tom
Chuck
Al
Mike
Randy

CAST
Frankenfurter Neal
Columbia Budgie
Brad Patrick
Janet Sherry
Rocky Don
Narrator Joe
Magenta Robert
Riff-Raff Greg
Eddie John
Dr. Scott Jimmie
Bride Liz
Groom Dale
Bridesmaids Jim
Jim
Mother of the Bride Matthew
Idiot Andrew
Richard

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

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NEWS

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Hardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of Integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

We met at

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CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Gals of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOON (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11/22

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's convenor, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Hotline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

MEXICO CITY EARTHQUAKE AFFECTS MCC

Immediately following the earthquake in Mexico City, MCC churches all over the world received a call for help from Fellowship Moderator Troy Perry. His call, "Help ICM (initials for MCC in Spanish) Mexico City." They had not asked for help, but an MCC fact-finding commission visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

Dr. Virginia Carrizales, a dentist, was seriously injured when her home and office building collapsed. She was trapped in the rubble and part of her foot had to be amputated. Her companion, Magdalena Martinez, was killed in the collapse of an adjoining room. Both had applied to become medical missionaries with MCC, asking to work in one of the 3rd World countries where MCC has churches (like Nigeria). Other members homes were totally or partially destroyed, including that of a member of their Board of Directors.

A member of ICM Mexico City prayed, "Out of these ruins may a better Mexico arise." Dr. Hernandez, Director of MCC's Hispanic Americas District quoted Psalm 102:16-17: "When God shall build up Zion and appear in glory, God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayers."

from the fellowship

(CONT'D)

November

- 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.11.12.13.14.15.16.17.18.19.20.21.22.23.24.25.26.27.28.29.30.31.

- 1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.11.12.13.14.15.16.17.18.19.20.21.22.23.24.25.26.27.28.29.30.31.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California, when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and groan when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf. Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic — socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short — thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you, God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona | Treasurer - Tom |
| Clerk - Ron | Outreach Chair - John |
| Publications Chair - Mike | Deacon Candidate - Ken |
| Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat | |

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Hotline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.



MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- it is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary.

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses.

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starchy-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche Dubois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

- The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
- The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
- Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
- They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
- Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **FROM THE BOOK SHELF**

Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance; Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for Lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.

(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW-THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 16, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.

Chairman of the Production Greg
Director Neal
Set Design & Construction Grace
Evelyn
Costume Design & Execution Robert
Neal
Hair Design Tom
Make Up Chuck
AI
Music and Lights Mike
Randy

CAST
Frankenfurter
Columbia
Brad
Janet
Rocky
Narrator
Joe
Magenta
Riff-Raff
Eddie
John
Dr. Scott
Jimmie
Liz
Dale
Jim
John
Jm
Matthew
Andrew
Richard
Idiot

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

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FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and Lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

NEWS

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of Integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

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CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles?? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met which much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Gals of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11/22

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's co-venter, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Hotline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing.

Painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

1. Rocky Horror Show
2. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
3. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
4. Happy Birthday, Nurses Randy
5. Unifair - Universalists
6. Happy Birthday, Jim S Issues
7. MCC RAY - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
8. CFA Regular Canti - Potluck Sisters
9. Active in Faith.
10. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
11. Happy Birthday, Helen
12. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
13. Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
14. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
15. UU's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
16. MCC RAY - Free choice of topic
17. CFA - Free choice of topic
18. MCC-ESQUIRE SPAGHETTI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
19. Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
20. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
21. CFA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
22. Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
23. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
24. UU's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
25. MCC RAY - Free Choice of Topic
26. DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
27. \$50 1st Prize, \$25 2nd
28. for best toga costume
29. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
30. WRITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for location
31. Happy Birthday, Dee
32. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
33. CFA - Name That Tune, Free Buffet
34. Happy Hour Prices, No cover
35. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
36. UU's - Men's Lives, Men's Issues
37. MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE
38. ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
39. CFA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
40. Sisters of St. Nicholas Pageant
41. HAPPY THANKSGIVING
42. David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast
43. 3 p.m. - till
44. Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
45. 7:30 - till
46. Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
47. 28, 29, 30 David's Special Guest -
48. Bethia Butts
49. 30 Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m.
50. 12 Midnight.

DONOR

1. SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
2. CFA - Name That Tune - Free Buffet
3. Happy Hour Prices, No cover

AIDS BENEFIT

Official cast of the Rocky Horror Show and the Esquire will be donating their time to raise money for AIDS research. November 27th, 9 p.m. Tables reserved according to donation. Donations at the door begin at a minimum of \$5.00. All donations received will go to AIDS Research. This is the first AIDS benefit in Mobile, please support these efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California, when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf. Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

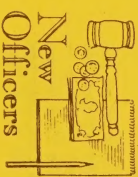
Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am firenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona | Treasurer - Tom |
| Clerk - Ron | Outreach Chair - John |
| Publications Chair - Mike | Deacon Candidate - Ken |
| Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat | |

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.

from the fellowship

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus load. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary."

"By continuing unsafe sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses."

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes gay people, lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- it is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human face is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOEVER.

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- a God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand that it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche DuBois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown," Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YES, I want to help ICM Mexi. City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MOC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MOC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:
 --The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
 --The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
 --Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
 They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
 --Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Celia Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **THE BOOK SHELF FROM**
 Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

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"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.
 (This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW-THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 16/2, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.
 Chairman of the Production Greg Neal
 Director Neal
 Set Design & Construction Grace Evelyn
 Costume Design & Execution Robert Gary
 Hair Design Tom
 Make Up Chuck
 Music and Lights Al
 Randy

CAST
 Frankenfurther Neal
 Columbia Budgie
 Brad Patrick
 Janet Sherry
 Rocky Don
 Narrator Joe
 Magenta Robert
 Riff-Raff Greg
 Eddie John
 Dr. Scott Jimmie
 Bride Liz
 Groom Dale
 Bridesmaids Jim
 John
 Jim
 Matthew
 Andrew
 Richard
 Mother of the Bride
 Idiot

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

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FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

NEWS

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP

Anahim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of Integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

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CLEANING-INTERIOR PAINTING, WALLPAPER. Organize your precious collectibles? Excellent references in both communities. 476-9142, ask for Shirley.

BOWLING LEAGUE - Members of MOC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

community events

DIGNITY NUCLEUS FORMED

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elected by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SODM-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Gals of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SODM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's co-vener, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

November

- 10:00 Rocky Horror Show
- 11:00 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 12:00 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 4 Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
- 5:00 Unitarian-Universalists
- Men's Lives-Men's Issues
- 6 Happy Birthday, Jim S
- 6:00 MCC RAV - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
- 7 CFA Regular Cast - Potpourri Sisters Alive in Paris.
- 8 Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 9 Happy Birthday, Helen
- 10 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 11 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 12 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 13 10:00 Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 13:00 M C RAV - Free choice of topic
- 16 10:00 Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 16 MCC-ESQUIRE REAGNETTI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
- 17 Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
- 17 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 18 CPA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
- 18 Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 19 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 19 10:00 Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 19 MCC RAV - Free choice of Topic
- 20 DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
- 20 \$50 1st Prize, \$25 2nd
- 21 Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 21 Writers Group-Call 476-9142 for location
- 22 Happy Birthday, Dee
- 24 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 24 CPA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
- 24 Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 25 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 25 10:00 Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 26 MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE
- 27 ESQUIRE - AIDS REMEMPT - ROCKY HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
- 28 CPA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
- 28 Sitecast, Stitches Regent
- 28 Happy THANKSGIVING
- 28 David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast
- 3 P.m. - till
- Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
- Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 28:29,30 David's Special Guest -
- Bertha Butts
- 30 Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m.
- 12 Midnight.

DR. FEMBER

- 1 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- CPA - Name that Tune - Free Buffet
- Happy Hour Prices, No cover

AIDS BENEFIT

Original cast of the Rocky Horror Show will be donating their time to raise money for AIDS research. November 27th, 9 p.m. Tables reserved according to donation. Donations at the door begin at a minimum of \$5.00. All donations received will go to AIDS Research. This is the first AIDS benefit in Mobile, please support these efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf.

Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

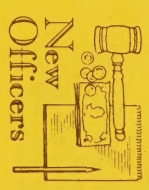
Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

- Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona
- Clerk - Ron
- Publications Chair - Mike
- Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat
- Treasurer - Tom
- Outreach Chair - John
- Deacon Candidate - Ken

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.



Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes gay people, lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people, that God gave the only-begotten child who heterosexuals might have eternal life". Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary."

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.
"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses."

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche Dubois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes, firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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Rev. MARGE RAGONA

Pastor

(205) 476-9142

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YES, I want to help ICM Mexi City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering, we prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to the cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to teach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:
 --The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
 --The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
 --Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
 They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
 --Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

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 Chairman of the Production Greg
 Director Neal
 Set Design & Construction Evelyn
 Costume Design & Execution Neal
 Hair Design Tom
 Make Up Chuck
 Al
 Mike
 Randy

Casting
 Music and Lights
 Chuck
 Al
 Mike
 Randy

Costume Design & Execution
 Hair Design
 Make Up
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NEWS

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

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BOWLING LEAGUE - Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity Group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOOM-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Cwls of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11/2

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's convenor, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

- 1. Rocky Horror Show
- 2. COMBAT WORSHP MCC
- 3. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 4. Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
- 5. Universal-Universallists

Men's Lives-Men's Issues
Happy Birthday, Jim S
MCC RAP - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
CRA Regular Cast - Pofter Sisters Alive in Paris.

Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
Happy Birthday, Helen

SUNDAY WORSHP MCC

- 11. Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 12. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 13. U's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 14. MCC RAP - Free choice of topic
- 15. U's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 16. MCC-ESQUIRE SYNCHRONI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HEADLINE.

Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
SUNDAY WORSHP MCC 7 p.m.

- 17. CFA - Name That Tune, Free Buffet
- 18. Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
- 19. U's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 20. MCC RAP - Free choice of Topic

DAVID S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
\$30 1st Prize, \$25 2nd

Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
WRITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for location

Happy Birthday, Dee
SUNDAY WORSHP MCC 7 p.m.

- 24. CFA - Name That Tune, Free Buffet
- 25. Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 26. U's - Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 27. MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE

ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY HORROR SHOW - \$3.00

CFA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
Sisters of Stitches Elegant

HAPPY THANKSGIVING
David S - Free Thanksgiving Feast

3 p.m. - call
Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet

7:30 - call
Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.

28, 29, 30 David's Special Guest - Betha Butts

30, Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m.
12 Midnight.

DR. PHEER
SUNDAY WORSHP MCC 7 p.m.

CFA - Name That Tune - Free Buffet
Happy Hour Prices, No cover

AIDS BENEFIT
Official cast of the Rocky Horror Show and the Esquire will be donating their time to raise money for AIDS research. November 27th, 9 p.m. Tables reserved according to donation. Donations at the door begin at a minimum of \$3.00. All donations received will go to AIDS Research. This is the first AIDS benefit in Mobile, please support efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and growl when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf.
Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



Chanksquidling



New Officers

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

- The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:
- Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona
- Clerk - Ron
- Publications Chair - Mike
- Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat
- Treasurer - Tom
- Outreach Chair - John
- Deacon Candidate - Ken

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.

from the fellowship

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on so stars where no human race is,
I have it in me -- so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load.' We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary."

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses."

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the gambit as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous practice. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop asking excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche DuBois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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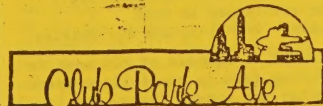
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Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YFS, I want to help ICM Mexi. City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to IOM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to IOM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

- The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
- The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
- Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
- They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
- Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **FROM THE BOOK SHELF**

Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance; Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983. (This, too, is in the library, call # 646.78B.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW-THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 12, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.
 Chairman of the Production Greg Neal
 Director Grace
 Set Design & Construction Evelyn Gary
 Costume Design & Execution Neal Robert
 Hair Design Tom
 Make Up Chuck
 AI Mike
 Music and Lights Randy

CAST

Frankenfurter Neal
 Columbia Budgie
 Brad Patrick
 Janet Sherry
 Rocky Don
 Narrator Joe
 Magenta Robert
 Riff-Raff Greg
 Eddie John
 Dr. Scott Jimmie
 Liz
 Groom Dale
 Bridesmaids Jim
 Jim
 Mother of the Bride Matthew
 Idiot Andrew
 Richard

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

AZALEA CITY FLORIST

Say it with flowers. Say it with ours

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New customer credit always welcome

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

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BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

ANGELICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

community events

DIGNITY NUCLEUS FORMED

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Ovals of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's co-venter, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

November

- 1 Rocky Horror Show
- 2 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 3 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 4 Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
- 5. Unitarian-Universalists
- Men's Lives-Men's Issues
- 6 Happy Birthday, Jim S
- MCC RAP - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
- 7 CPA Regular Cont. - Pottery Station Alive in Paris.
- 8 Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 9 Happy Birthday, Helen
- 10 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 11 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 12 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 13 UVI's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 14 M C RAP - Free choice of topic
- 15 7 o'pers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 16 MCC-ESQUIRE SPAGHETTI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
- 17 Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
- SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 18 CPA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
- Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
- 19 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 20 UVI's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- MCC RAP - Free Choice of Topic
- DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
- \$50 1st Prize, \$25 2nd
- for best toga costume
- 21 Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 22 WRITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for location
- Happy Birthday, Dee
- 24 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- CPA - Name That Tune, Free Buffet
- 25 Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 26 UVI's - Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 27 MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE
- ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
- CPA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
- 28 Sisters of St. Thomas - Free Thanksgiving Feast
- Happy THANKSGIVING
- David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast 3 p.m. - till
- Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet 7:30 - till
- Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 29,30 David's Special Guest - Bertha Butts
- 30, Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 P.m. 12 Midnight.

Dinner

- 1 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- (PA) - Name That Tune - Free Buffet
- Happy Hour Prices, No cover

AIDS BENEFIT

Official cast of the Rocky Horror Show and the Esquire will be donating their time to raise money for AIDS research. November 27th, 9 p.m. Tables reserved according to donation. Donations at the door begin at a minimum of \$5.00. All donations received will go to AIDS Research. This is the first AIDS benefit in Mobile, please support these efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and grovel when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf.

Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

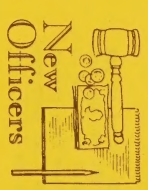
Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

- Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona
- Clerk - Ron
- Publications Chair - Mike
- Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat
- Treasurer - Tom
- Outreach Chair - John
- Deacon Candidate - Ken

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned. Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.



WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Botan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary.

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role. If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses.

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- it is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces

Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,

I have it in me so much nearer home

To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life." Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche DuBois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the Gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are Gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.-

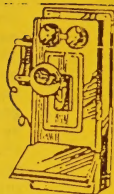
More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YES, I want to help ICM Mexico City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

FROM THE EDITOR-- Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Garzaales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:

- The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.
- The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
- Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.
- They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.
- Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Gena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **FROM THE BOOK SHELF**

- Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.
- "Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."
- Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.
- Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance; Identify in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue; gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents; a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.

(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries; children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW-THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 12, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.

- Chairman of the Production: Greg Neal
- Director: Grace Evelyn
- Set Design & Construction: Gary Neal
- Costume Design & Execution: Robert Gary
- Hair Design: Tom
- Make Up: Chuck Al
- Music and Lights: Mike Randy

- CAST
- Frankenfurter: Neal
- Columbia: Budgie
- Brad: Patrick
- Janet: Sherry
- Rocky: Don
- Narrator: Joe
- Magenta: Robert
- Riff-Raff: Greg
- Eddie: John
- Dr. Scott: Jimmie
- Bride: Liz
- Groom: Dale
- Bridesmaids: Jim
- Jim: John
- Matthew: Andrew
- Idiot: Richard
- Mother of the Bride: Jim

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

AZALEA CITY FLORIST

Say it with flowers. Say it with ours

George Coulter, Owner
New customer credit always welcome

FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anheilm. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

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BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

community events

DIGNITY NUCLEUS FORMED

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elected by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 362-7891.

SOOM-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Owls of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11/22

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's convenor, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

MEXICO CITY EARTHQUAKE AFFECTS MCC

Immediately following the earthquake in Mexico City, MCC churches all over the world received a call for help from Fellowship Moderator Troy Perry. His call, "help ICM (initials for MCC in Spanish) Mexico City." They had not asked for help, but an MCC fact-finding commission visited and discovered that many of our people had been affected by the quake.

Dr. Virginia Carrizales, a dentist, was seriously injured when her home and office building collapsed. She was trapped in the rubble and part of her foot had to be amputated. Her companion, Magdalena Martinez, was killed in the collapse of an adjoining room. Both had applied to become medical missionaries with MCC, asking to work in one of the 3rd World countries where MCC has churches (like Nigeria). Other members homes were totally or partially destroyed, including that of a member of their Board of Directors.

A member of ICM Mexico City prayed, "Out of these ruins may a better Mexico arise." Dr. Hernandez, Director of MCC's Hispanic Americas District quoted Psalm 102:16-17: "When God shall build up Zion and appear in glory, God will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayers."

from the fellowship

CALNDAR

November

- 10:00 AM Rocky Horror Show
- 12:00 PM SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 3:00 PM Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 4:00 PM Happy Birthday, Nurse Randy
- 5:00 PM Underlarian-Universalists
- 6:00 PM Happy Birthday, Jim S
- 7:00 PM MCC RAY - All you wanted to know but were afraid to ask.
- 8:00 PM CFA Regular Card- Potpourri Slators Alive in Paris.
- 9:00 PM Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 10:00 PM Happy Birthday, Helen
- 11:00 PM SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 12:00 PM Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 13:00 PM Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 14:00 PM WU's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 15:00 PM M.C. RAP - Free choice of topic
- 16:00 PM T.O.P.E.R.S. - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 17:00 PM M.C. ESQUIRE SPAGHETTI DINNER, SUPPORT THE HELPLINE.
- 18:00 PM Happy Birthday, Debbie Ann
- 19:00 PM SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 20:00 PM CFA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
- 21:00 PM Happy Hour Prices, No Cover
- 22:00 PM Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 23:00 PM WU's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 24:00 PM MCC RAP - Free choice of Topic
- 25:00 PM DAVID'S - Toga Party 9 p.m.
- 26:00 PM \$50 1st Prize, \$25 2nd
- 27:00 PM for best toga costume
- 28:00 PM Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 29:00 PM WRITERS GROUP-Call 476-9142 for
- 30:00 PM Happy Birthday location
- 31:00 PM SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 32:00 PM CFA - Name that Tune, Free Buffet
- 33:00 PM Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 34:00 PM Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 35:00 PM WU's Men's Lives, Men's Issues
- 36:00 PM MCC THANKSGIVING SERVICE
- 37:00 PM ESQUIRE - AIDS BENEFIT - ROCKY HORROR SHOW - \$5.00
- 38:00 PM CFA - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
- 39:00 PM HAPPY THANKSGIVING
- 40:00 PM David's - Free Thanksgiving Feast
- 41:00 PM Society - Free Thanksgiving Buffet
- 42:00 PM Troopers - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 43:00 PM 28, 29, 30 David's Special Guest -
- 44:00 PM Barthia Butts
- 45:00 PM 30, Dec 1 Society - Weekend Shows 10 p.m.
- 46:00 PM 12 Midnight.
- 47:00 PM DECEMBER
- 48:00 PM SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC 7 p.m.
- 49:00 PM CFA - Name that Tune - Free Buffet
- 50:00 PM Happy Hour Prices, No cover
- 51:00 PM AIDS BENEFIT
- 52:00 PM Original cast of the Rocky Horror Show and the Esquire will be donating their time to raise money for AIDS research. November 27th, 9 p.m. Tables reserved according to donation. Donations should be made by November 20th. \$5.00. All donations received will go to AIDS Research. This is the first AIDS benefit in Mobile. Please support these efforts.

...from the pastor

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and grovel when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf.

Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast.

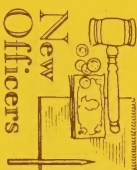
Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

- Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona
- Clerk - Ron
- Publications Chair - Mike
- Deacon Candidate - Ken
- Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat
- Treasurer - Tom
- Outreach Chair - John
- Deacon Candidate - Ken

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE



It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned.

Possible suggestions for the play included "P.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolan, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, has to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus load." We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary.

"By continuing unsafe sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses."

"Continued unsafe sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The state of your health varies from day to day. And reported, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing unsafe sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes gay people, lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- it is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being tolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- A God who comforts and heals all people -- A God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche Dubois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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The Metropolitan Community Church

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MOBILE, ALABAMA 36608

Rev. MARGE RAGONA

(205) 476-9142

Pastor

VOLUME I, No.3

November 1985

NEWSLETTER

It may seem that we're leaning heavily on "What's an MCC?" this month. A couple of things prompt us to do so. We have heard questions and remarks made to some church members asking why we have our own church, for example. Or remarks such as, "You queens are just playing church."

It's not the church that matters, but the message the church offers. That brings us to our second reason for telling about ourselves again this month. For those of you who have encountered the street preachers (Bible-thumper types) downtown, you already know the message THEY preach, "Hell and damnation for our community unless we repent of our sexual sins."

A small group of us at MCC at Mobile took on the street preachers. Channel 10's 10 o'clock news, at the request of Jim at CPA, also arrived to document the occasion. For one weekend, we carried placards that said things like, "Bigotry never won anyone to Christ," "I am a Christian Lesbian," and "Born gay and born again." It began to shake them that there was some opposition to their constant harassment and condemnation and they brought in reinforcements. Still the old message went on, that of hatred for Catholics, Jews, and Gays. MCC felt that we had the "good news of the Gospel," while they had the "bad news of the Gospel," their God was the same old God holding humanity over the lake of fire, waiting to drop the last sinner in. We feel and felt differently, and were willing to challenge them to "Judge not, lest they be judged by the same measure where with they judged."

We are not sure we won -- or if in a situation such as this that there is ever a winner. We believe in their right to preach the gospel -- but we insist that they preach the whole gospel. God is not just the judge, but is also the God of love who welcomes the sinner (remember the Prodigal?) home.

If we could advise our adversaries, our advice would be, if you're going to preach to gay people, at least, let them see the love of God and the acceptance of God -- tune down your constant cry of condemnation -- and try to walk in our shoes for just a little way. You'd be surprised how many pebbles and how often we stumble, but like the scripture says, we have learned that "Those who wait upon our God shall renew their strength. They shall mount up on wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." God go with you.

YES, I want to help ICM Mexico City. Here's my gift of \$ _____
to help sisters and brothers affected by the earthquake.

Thanksgiving

Customarily in MCC, we have a Thanksgiving evening service, with an offering. We prepare for that offering by fasting the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and giving what we would have spent for food. That offering is usually given to a cause which feeds, clothes, or houses the needy. This year, because of the tragedy in Mexico, MCC at Mobile's offering will go to ICM Mexico City. Anyone wishing to be part of that offering -- and particularly we ask our sisters to reach out to bring a measure of comfort to Virginia Carrizales by giving an offering in the name of Magdalena -- may send a check made out to ICM Mexico City and we will forward it to them. God bless you all for your love to these our brothers and sisters.

In our prayers this Thanksgiving let us include the following:
 --The people of South Africa and their leaders, who, under great threat, are leading their people to equality and justice.

--The children of Africa, who, in large numbers, are facing starvation.
 --Those in our country who are unemployed, mentally ill, or who for no fault of their own are facing the coming winter as homeless and hungry people.

They are not there by choice, but the largest number are there because they are deinstitutionalized mentally ill unable to care for themselves who become "bag ladies" or derelict men. Some are gay. Let each of us, in our own way, make a personal commitment to help, as we can, those who cannot help themselves.

--Gay men and women who are in prisons for sexual offenses -- many for prostitution, soliciting, sex with persons under legal age, or other quasi-illegal offenses in which there is no victim, except the person in prison. Pray that our laws will be changed to be more just and more compassionate.

Check it Out

NBC, Channel 10, 8-10 p.m. "An Early Frost" a movie dealing with a family whose son has AIDS. First TV fictional production dealing with AIDS. Stars Cena Rowlands, Ben Gazzara, Sylvia Sidney, Sidney Wash, Bill Paxton, Aidan Quinn.

Some books which our spy at the library has suggested are: **THE BOOK SHELF**

Scroggs, Robin: The New Testament and Homosexuality: Contextual background for contemporary debate. Fortress Press, 1983.

"Scroggs argues that the New Testament does not address today's 'gay concerns', and that it should not be twisted to make it fit..."

Schultenburg, Joy: Gay Parenting. Doubleday/Anchor, Nov. 1985.

Krieger, Susan: The Mirror Dance: Identity in a Women's Community. Temple University Press, 1983.

Grahn, Judy: Another mother tongue: gay words, gay worlds. Beacon Press, 1984.

"Excellent. History of words and language in relation to Lesbians and gay men." (This one is available in the library, call # 306.766 G.)

Borhek, Mary V. Coming out to parents: a two-way survival guide for lesbians and gay men and their parents. Pilgrim Press, 1983.

(This, too, is in the library, call # 646.788.)

Gantz, Joe: Whose child cries: children of gay parents talk about their lives. Galmar Press, 1983.

REVIEW-THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

November 12, 1985. Presented by the Order of Osiris and the Esquire House.

Chairman of the Production
 Neal
 Director
 Grace
 Set Design & Construction
 Evelyn
 Costume Design & Execution
 Gary
 Neal
 Robert
 Hair Design
 Tom
 Make Up
 Chuck
 Al
 Mike
 Randy
 Music and Lights

CAST
 Frankenfurther
 Columbia
 Brad
 Janet
 Rocky
 Narrator
 Joe
 Magenta
 Riff-Raff
 Eddie
 Dr. Scott
 Liz
 Dale
 Groom
 Bridesmaids
 John
 Jim
 Matthew
 Andrew
 Mother of the Bride
 Idiot
 Richard

You may wonder why we listed the stage crew first. They did a magnificent job and because of such a first-rate effort the task was made easier for the cast of the production.

WELL DONE OSIRIS AND ESQUIRE!! Two people in our party knew the movie by heart -- even knew the words to every song. High praise on every aspect of the production was given.

It is impossible to single out any one cast member as a show stealer -- each one stole the show at one point or another.

It proves that our community is loaded with talent, as the Rocky Horror Show so amply demonstrated. Let's have more.

AZALEA CITY FLORIST

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FRANCE PASSES PROTECTION BILL

Paris. France became the first nation to prohibit antigay discrimination on a national scale. The bill, which includes racial and religious minorities as well, prohibits discrimination in housing, employment and access to government services. Originally passed by the General Assembly, the bill was then defeated in the opposition-controlled Senate, but that veto was subsequently overridden by the General Assembly. (In the French Government, the General Assembly has the ultimate decision-making power.) The bill will become law as soon as it is published in the Official Journal of the Legislature.

CHURCHES SUPPORT FEDERAL BILL

Washington. Eleven different denominations sent a joint letter to the members of the U.S. Congress in support of the national gay and Lesbian civil rights bill, HR 230. The letter was signed by the representatives of the Church of the Brethren, United Methodist Church, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ, Episcopal Church, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Unitarian-Universalist Association, American Ethical Union, and National Council of Churches. Though acknowledging that some of the traditions represented opposed the practice of homosexuality, the letter said that they all "maintain strong support for the protection of basic civil and human rights of all persons." The letter was coordinated by Ralph Watkins, Legislative Counsel of the Church of the Brethren, who said, "We have been offended that the public portrayal of religious perspectives on this issue has focused almost exclusively on negative, anti-gay sentiments."

OSIRIS NEWS

The Order of Osiris moves on target to the celebration of its 5th Annual Mardi Gras Ball, February 7, 1986.

Attire for the ball is formal. Tuxedos and tails of all colors are permitted. All gowns must be floor length.

Tickets go on sale Thanksgiving weekend. Contact an Osiris member as soon as possible. Remember, they are in limited supply

ANGLICANS ELECT PRESIDING BISHOP Anaheim. Stating that the chief operating motto of the church should be "There are no outcasts," the new chief pastor of the Episcopal Church graciously accepted his election September 10, 1985. The Right Reverend Raymond Lee Browning was elected presiding bishop and primate of the 2.7 million member Episcopal Church. With a reputation of broad international experience and support of gay ordination and opposition to the nuclear arms race, Bishop Browning is a member of integrity (an organization of gay Episcopalians and their friends) and was among the group of Episcopal prelates to dissent publicly from the church's 1979 decision barring the ordination of "practicing homosexuals."

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BOWLING LEAGUE -- Members of MCC want to form a bowling team to hopefully compete against other gay groups (bars, etc.). At least six teams are needed. Call the HELPLINE if you are interested.

community events

DIGNITY NUCLEUS FORMED

Ten people have expressed an interest in forming a Dignity group in Mobile. Dignity is a national organization for gay Catholics and their friends. The purpose is to provide a social/spiritual outlet and to try to rebuild a relationship with the Mother Church.

John P. who is heading the drive for a Dignity chapter said that a steering group has been formed and will try to contact the Archbishop in November. He noted that he was elated by the type of people who are interested in the idea of forming a chapter in Mobile. "It will provide another much-needed outlet for gay and lesbian people in this community," he said. More information can be obtained by calling 476-9142 or 342-7891.

SOON-SAGE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

Efforts to organize a club for older gays and lesbians has not met with much success, according to John P. who has offered to head the drive. The Silver Ovals of Mobile is a club which will provide older members of the community, over the age of 40, and younger people who enjoy associating with older gays and lesbians, the opportunity to socialize. "Many older gays simply do not have a social outlet other than the bars, where they are generally ignored," said John. Information about SOOM (and about SAGE, a national organization for older gays) can be obtained by calling 476-9142.

GAY WRITERS TO MEET 11/22

Some professional and amateur writers from the community will meet for the first time in November for the initial meeting of the Metropolitan Writers' Club.

The purpose of the club is to provide a sounding board and support group for gay writers. Members are expected to bring a sample of their work for reading and critiquing.

According to Shirley, the group's convenor, this group is not just for gay or lesbian writers, but would benefit anyone interested in improving communication skills. She noted that at least one non-gay friendly to the community has joined the group.

Call the Helpline 476-9142, if you are interested.

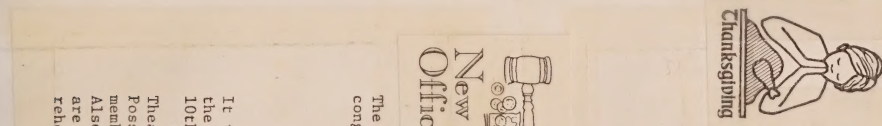
SKETCH GROUP NEWS

The newly formed sketch group will start field trips to various parts of the county and environs on Sundays. The purpose is to provide companionship for gay and lesbian people and to encourage people to improve their drawing, painting and sketching skills. People can bring a bag, lunch and can spend most of the day working. "After everyone is finished, we will have a general critique session, which will benefit us all." Even if you have never tried to draw, you might be surprised at your ability. Join us. Call 476-9142 for more information.

CALENDAR November

NOVEMBER

- 1&2 Rocky Horror Show
- 3 SUNDAY WORSHIP MCC
- 4 Corral - Pool Tournament 9 p.m.
- 7 Happy Birthday, Miss Randy Utilitarian-Dixie-Realists
- 8 Happy Birthday, Jim's Issues
- 9 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 10 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 11 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 12 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 13 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
- 14 Happy Birthday, Joe Talley
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FROM THE PASTOR

As I was thinking about the story about Mexico City, I remembered something I had once printed in a newsletter for MCC Ventura, California when I pastored there. I enclose it now in the hope that it will make your Thanksgiving more meaningful.

Even tho' I clutch my blanket and grovel when the alarm rings every morning, thank you, God, that I can hear; there are many who are deaf. Even tho' I keep my eyes tightly closed against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, God, that I am able to see; there are many who are blind.

Even tho' I huddle in my bed and put off getting up, thank you, God, that I have strength to rise; there are many who are bedfast. Even tho' the first hour of my day is hectic -- socks are lost, toast is burned, and tempers are short -- thank you, God, for my lover and family; there are many who are lonely.

Even tho' our breakfast table never looks like those in House Beautiful and the menu is sometimes unbalanced, thank you, God, for the food we have; there are those who are hungry.

Even tho' my job is often monotonous or I am frenzied, thank you God for the opportunity to work; there are many who are unemployed.

Even tho' I grumble from day to day and wish my circumstances were not quite so moderate, thank you, God, for the gift of life, for what I have, and for what I can give to others.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

From the Congregational Meeting, 10/27/85

The following people were elected to their respective positions by action of the congregation:

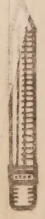
- Pastor - Rev. Marge Ragona
- Treasurer - Tom
- Clerk - Ron
- Outreach Chair - John
- Deacon Candidate - Ken
- Student Clergy Candidates: Vivian, Pat

It was decided we were hosting two dinners jointly with other organizations in the upcoming months: November 16th, Spaghetti Dinner at Esquire; December 10th, Elegant gourmet dinner at David's.

Theater presentation with rehearsals beginning in January is being planned.

Possible suggestions for the play included "F.S. Your Cat is Dead." Community members with acting or directing experience are invited to try out for the play. Also people with backstage experience (lighting, etc.) are being sought. If you are interested contact the Helpline and we will be in touch with you nearer to rehearsal schedule.

SPECIAL EVENTS TO NOTE



from the fellowship

WHAT DOES EXPOSURE TO THE AIDS VIRUS MEAN?

A common excuse for continuing the practice of Unsafe Sex is: "I was exposed to AIDS a long time ago. Either I'm already going to get it or I'm immune. Why practice safer sex now?"

What does exposure to the AIDS virus mean? Does it mean that AIDS is inevitable? Does exposure to the AIDS virus make you immune to AIDS? Or do repeated exposures only increase the risk of contracting and spreading the disease?

Here's what Robert Bolin, M.D., Chairman of the Board of the AIDS Foundation, had to say about exposure to the AIDS virus:

We don't know how much of the virus is needed for AIDS to result.

"Any infectious agent must get into the body in sufficient numbers to overcome the body's defenses. This is called a virus 'load'. We don't know how much of an AIDS virus load is needed for disease to result. We don't know if this load can be acquired at one time, or if many exposures may be necessary.

"By continuing Unsafe Sex practices, you virtually assure that you will be repeatedly exposed. It's a dangerous risk."

The state of your health can play an important role.

"If you are exposed to an infectious agent with a long incubation period (like tuberculosis), the state of your health following exposure can play an important part in determining whether or not you will become ill with the disease, or if so, how ill you will become. This may also be the case for AIDS viruses.

"Continued Unsafe Sex will expose you to other viruses and bacteria which can further weaken your immune system. A weakened immune system provides less resistance to the AIDS virus. Also, co-factors such as alcohol, drug use, nutrition, and stress may play a role."

It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

There is evidence that the AIDS virus may be unstable and changing rapidly. Even if an immunity is developed to one virus, it may not protect against a slightly different virus. It may not be possible to develop an immunity to AIDS.

"This type of phenomenon is seen in other viruses, too. The Influenza A virus, for example, changes slowly over time. The changing virus is the reason for major flu epidemics every few years."

No one can calculate your chances of getting AIDS.

Remember, there are many variables involved in contracting and spreading AIDS. The virus may be unstable and changing. The state of your health varies from day to day. And repeated, unsafe exposures increase your risk.

Using the past as an excuse to take risks today is a dangerous gamble. If we want to stop the spread of AIDS:

We have to stop making excuses.

We have to stop practicing Unsafe Sex.

(reprinted from the SF AIDS Foundation)

MORE ABOUT MCC

Metropolitan Community Church is a church which proclaims liberation for all people. It is a church which extends its ministry to persons of all races and backgrounds, to young and old alike, to rich and poor. It is a church which welcomes Gay people, Lesbians, and heterosexuals to worship together, to witness and serve together -- It is a rare church -- for to those of us who have committed ourselves to being members of MCC, it is a church which demands of us a fidelity to Christ which few churches have asked of us, and which few churches have demonstrated to us. It is a church which asks us to love all people because we have first been loved by a God who does not differentiate between God's non-gay and Gay people.

MCC came into existence 17 years ago when our founder, Troy Perry, was called to see a young man in prison. The man had tried to take his own life, and friends who knew that Troy had been a Pentecostal minister called Troy to ask him to talk to the young man, and see if some hope could be brought into the midst of despair. Troy, in listening to him heard when he cried out, "Everyone has deserted me, even God!" At that moment Troy Perry realized that he had been given a prophetic task. He was to speak to the gay community and tell them that God does not desert us. We may turn our backs on God, blaming God for what individual churches have done to us -- but God does not desert us, and in those times when we are confronted with our own loneliness, despair, and degradation, God speaks to us.

The poet Robert Frost, in a poem called Desert Places talks about the emotions we feel when we are aware of our isolation:

They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars -- on stars where no human race is,
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.

The need to love and be loved is universal. It is no more strange for us as gay people to want to love, to need to be loved, and to need to find in our God acceptance for who we are, as we are. We in MCC know that the need for love -- and the need for justice -- are synonymous. We know that gay people have become separated members of the body of Christ out of necessity, because that body has strayed from demonstrating that all human beings need not only to be loved, but to be dealt with justly.

We are an oppressed people. We know that we are oppressed because each of us at a dozen places in the day come up against that oppression. Every time we hear of a gay man or lesbian being attacked on the street -- every time we read of a gay being murdered, or worse, committing murder rather than being discovered -- every time a friend attempts a self-destructive act, or a gay man or woman is locked up as criminal or crazy -- every time we experience fear of being thrown out, fired or forced to flee because of our sexuality -- every time we behave in a manner untrue to ourselves, by behaving heterosexually because society demands it -- every time we deny ourselves sexual contact with another when love is present along with sexual desire -- every time we hide or take to our "closet" -- every time we ghettoize ourselves or allow ourselves to be confined to a gay ghetto -- then we know we are an oppressed people. And we are the only oppressed people who cannot turn to our families and seek their comfort in our oppression -- for very often our families are the most oppressive. When we turn in our desert places to God, even there many of us have found oppression, and many of us have had to turn to the church and remind the church that Jesus did not say "God so loved straight people that God gave the only-begotten that only heterosexuals might have eternal life" Jesus, as we know him, said WHOSOEVER.

It seems to many of us that the progress which has been made in the 60's and 70's is being rolled back in the 80's -- and in the face of a more and more repressive and uncaring society there is a greater need than ever before for an MCC and what it stands for -- A God who accepts all people -- a God who comforts and heals all people -- a God who says to all people "Come out from your desert places into the cool green -- and I will lead you beside the green pastures, I will restore your soul."

How many of us are sick of sin! How many of us are tired of frantically running looking for peace in places where there is no peace. How many of us are tired of being looked at as solely sexual beings! How many of us would like a place where we can come with our lovers and our friends and say to each other, "This is who I really am -- this is me, a whole person, with not only a body, but a mind, a soul, a spirit which wants to be accepted by you, by myself, and yes, by God. How many of us would like a place where we can achieve personal integration. This is what MCC is all about. We are a worshipping community of gay men and women -- a church -- which takes its ministry seriously to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

MCC is a church which believes that is called to be the church of lovers! But the love which we speak of is not the starry-eyed sentimental variety that sets kids to giggling convulsively -- it is the love of mature Christian concern, characterized by courage, compassion, and care for those around us, a responsible recognition of the worth of every human being. It is a love which is called to a genuine concern for the well-being of all other persons, helping them when they are in need, consoling them in their loneliness, offering dignity when self-esteem is lost, extending encouragement when hope fades to despair.

We are a church which believes in the paradox of Christianity: When I lose myself in God, I find true meaning in life for myself. We understand the final scene of Christ's life: We know the desolation, the loneliness, the frustration. We understand what it is to be deserted by those who have claimed to love us, and we value the simple presence of friends who have stood by us when we have suffered the dark night of the soul, and who have shared their dignity with us when we had none left of our own. We understand the love of strangers, and we can relate when our brother Tennessee Williams has Blanche DuBois say, "Some times I have had to depend upon the kindness of strangers..." We know that he was writing out of the times and places when all of us as gay people have experienced love from strangers when our own families have turned their backs on us. Learning to offer that presence to others as a gift from ourselves is one of the things that MCC teaches -- we don't always do it perfectly, but it is a goal which we strive for, a mark that we aim for.

MCC is a place to learn courage, strength, and the ability to deal with our anger at the world, at those who misuse religion and even at our God. We are called to turn that anger to constructive uses to help fight discrimination and bigotry -- we are called to learn courage to break down our own closet doors and to speak openly to the world and call it to accounting for its misuse of the stranger and the poor.

"A new commandment," Jesus says, "I give you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this, will everyone know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." To this life of love are all people, gay and non-gay invited. Those who accept the challenge of Christ may proudly call themselves Christians. We call to the gay community to accept that challenge and become Christians who are gay, proud, and willing followers of Christ. That is what MCC is all about.

(Text of the first sermon Rev. Ragona preached at MCC at Mobile, March 3, 1985.)

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Have you ever noticed that particular gleam some people have in their eyes. I firmly believe that people who are DOERS always have it.

Mobile is loaded with talented DOERS. Certainly topping the list is Danni B. Since coming out six years ago, she has put together a long list of accomplishments for our community. Danni was instrumental in putting together our first Gay Pride Celebration Week in 1984. She and Harry put Pride together again in 1985.

The Order of Osiris has certainly enjoyed her energies and talents; Board of Directors sine 1982, 3rd VP, Queen of the Club 1983-84, President of the Order 1984-85, Ball Captain 1985-86. In her spare time Danni also works at Club Park Avenue.

More than most of us, Danni feels the pulse of our community through her employment and community activities. She strongly praises the openness and friendliness of our community compared to others like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham, etc. Also she feels that our local clubs offer each of us solid support and appreciation.

An interesting situation she encounters at the Club is the total openness of younger people think "It's OK to be young and gay, but the older crowd, 30 and up, can't be old and gay." As an example, many of the younger crowd bring their straight friends with them, which in turn threatens the older crowd, because of the same old fears and oppressions from family, employers, friends, etc.

"It's still the same: so many of our people can't afford (they think) to be seen downtown." Danni adds, "We need more places to meet, less threatening, if there is such. We also need to band together and take a stand somewhere. A good place to start is to repeal the entertainer's card for all employees of gay clubs." (More on this in later issues.)

A few observations now about Osiris by Danni -- "Osiris has the largest membership ever, and is growing. I feel now we are at a turning point as we celebrate our fifth year. We have new, younger members joining, and we should go on forever. I feel in the next few years there will be other societies formed as a result of Osiris' success."

Danni is a leader. She works long hours for us. We need more leaders like her, willing to pull their share of the load and move our community ahead.



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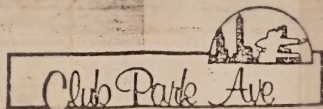
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